

List 15

MELKSHAM URBAN DISTRICT.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

1920.

*To the
Chairman and Members of the
Melksham Urban District Council.*

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit to you my Annual Report on the state of the public health in the district under your control during the year 1920. I have, as far as possible, kept to the schedule of the requirements issued by the Ministry of Health.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

The area of the town is 623 acres, and the estimated population 3,697. The number of inhabited houses is just over 800, and the rateable value of the district £12,300. Most of the town is built on a thick bed of Oxford clay of the middle oolite formation with here and there thin beds of gravel and alluvial drift. The river Avon runs through the district, and the derelict Wilts and Berks Canal skirts the south eastern boundaries. The climate is moist and relaxing. The chief industries are Rubber Manufacture, Engineering, Feather Purifying, Saw Milling and Milk Condensing. The economic conditions during the year were favourable to the public health, and one doubtful case only of industrial disease was notified to me.

The Cottage Hospital is preparing for increased accommodation, and when the new erection is complete there should be ample accommodation for the district.

Vital Statistics.—The recorded number of deaths during the year was 35, which gives the extremely low death-rate of 9·74. These figures are obtained by corrected list received from the general Register Office.

The **Infantile** death-rate was 12·3 per 1000 births.

The **Zymotic** death-rate was nil.

The **Tuberculosis** nil.

The **Cancer** 1·11 per 1000

The **Heart Disease** 0·83 „

Birth-rate.—81 births were registered, equal to a rate of 22·54.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISTRICT.

Water Supply. The town is supplied by the Trowbridge Water Co., which is incorporated by Act of Parliament. The water is derived from springs in the chalk and is of great purity. The hardness is due to the presence of Sulphate and Carbonate of Lime, and averages 19 degrees reducible by boiling to 5. Nearly every house in the town is supplied from this source.

Rivers and Streams.—I am not aware of any pollution of rivers or streams in your district.

Scavenging and Refuse Removal.—Street Scavenging is done by the Council's own employees. House refuse is collected twice a week and deposited on a field outside the town. This cannot be considered a desirable method. A few Sanitary Authorities should combine and have a Joint Destructor.

Drainage, etc.—There is a thorough up-to-date system of drainage, with disposal works and septic beds. I have made systematic inspection of these and am completely satisfied with their efficacy and excellent way in which they are managed. Nearly every house in the town is now connected with sewer.

Sanitary Inspection.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|----|
| Inspections made | ... | ... | 87 |
| Informal notices | ... | ... | 36 |
| Outstanding | ... | ... | 3 |
| Housing and Town Planning | ... | ... | 46 |
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SCHOOLS.

Elementary Schools.—There are two public elementary schools in the district. They are maintained in good sanitary condition. Water is laid on and the sanitary offices are sufficient and well kept. The physical examination of children is conducted by two whole time county officers. There have been widespread epidemics of measles, mumps and chicken pox during the autumn and winter months. There was no mortality.

FOOD.

Milk Supply.—Being in the centre of a large dairy farming area, the supply of milk is abundant, and from inspections of various dairy farms made during the past year, I have no hesitation in vouching for its pure and wholesome character. No case of Bovine Tuberculosis was reported to me.

Meat —There are three slaughter houses in the district, and nuisances found at the quarterly inspections have been remedied. In the absence of a public abattoir anything like systematic inspection of meat is impossible. One carcase was condemned.

Slaughter houses in use Jan. 1920, 3 ; Dec. 1920, 3.

Bakehouses.—There are five bakehouses in this district. These were regularly inspected and found in a most satisfactory condition.

Factories and Workshops.—The factories and workshops in the district were all kept under observation and I had no complaint to make.

Sale of Food and Drugs Act.—This Act is administered by the County Council.

Lodging Houses.—There are no registered common lodging houses.

PREVALENCE AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The following infectious diseases were notified :—

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|---|
| Ophthalmia Neonatorum | ... | ... | 1 |
| Diphtheria | ... | ... | 1 |
| Malaria | ... | ... | 3 |
| Tuberculosis | ... | ... | 1 |
| Scarlet Fever | ... | ... | 1 |
| Encephalitis Lethargica | ... | ... | 1 |

Methods of dealing with Infectious Diseases.—Cases of Diphtheria, Scarlatina and Enteric Fever are removed when desirable to the Joint Isolation

Hospital at Trowbridge. In this hospital there is ample accommodation for the treatment of these diseases. There is a permanent staff, an ambulance, a steam disinfecter and laundry.

Tuberculosis.—Vigorous action to combat this disease is taken by the County Council and the Wilts Insurance Committee. There are three Dispensaries and a Tuberculosis officer with visiting nurses. There are beds available at Winsley Sanatorium.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

As mentioned above there have been no cases of Puerperal Fever and one of Ophthalmia Neonatorum. All normal confinements are treated at the patient's homes, but any case of suspected difficulty or complication can be admitted to the local hospital.

HOUSING CONDITIONS.

As elsewhere throughout the country there is considerable overcrowding in certain parts of your district, but it is obviously impossible for me to take any action while there is such acute shortage of accommodation.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

D. LEIGH SPENCE,

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NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

The Rural Sanitary District of Melksham had a population of 4,979 at the last census. The number of inhabited houses is about 1,300. The area of the district is 13,650 acres, and the greater part is on the Oxford clay, with greensands at Seend and Sandridge, and thick beds of gravel at Beanacre. The River Avon, the Kennet and Avon Canal, and the disused Wilts and Berks Canal traverse parts of the district. The Workhouse of the Trowbridge and Melksham Union is situated at Semington within your district. The population is chiefly agricultural and residential, but there is an increasing number of mechanics and factory workers from Melksham and Trowbridge. Factories, there has been no case of industrial disease notified from your district during the past year. There are Cottage Hospitals at Trowbridge and Melksham, and the latter is preparing for an increased number of beds and there will then be ample accommodation for the district.

Vital Statistics.—The recorded number of deaths during the year was 35, which gives the extremely low death-rate of 7·58. Including 7 transferable deaths, the general or crude death-rate was 9·09.

The **Infantile** death-rate was 46·6 per 1000 births.

The **Zymotic** death-rate was nil per 1000

The **Tuberculosis** " "

The **Cancer** 1·08 per 1000

The **Heart Disease** 1·08 per 1000

Birth-rate.—107 births were registered, equal to a rate of 23·18.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISTRICT.

Water Supply.—The greater part of the district is within the area served by the Trowbridge Water Company. The supply is constant except at Sells Green where storage cisterns are used. At Seend and Sandridge there are wells in the greensand from which good drinking water is obtained.

Rivers and Streams.—I am not aware of any pollution of rivers or streams in your district.

Refuse and Excrement Disposal.—There is no system of scavenging. Like all rural districts there is a great variety of excrement disposal. In the more populous parts where there are sewers, water closets are generally in use, but for the most part there is a "conservancy" system comprising pails, dry closets, privies and cesspits. There are surprisingly few nuisances arising from these, and as nearly all cottages have gardens, most of the organic matter goes into the soil.

Sanitary Inspection.

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|----|
| Inspections made | ... | ... | ... | 30 |
| Informal notices | ... | ... | ... | 14 |
| Outstanding | ... | ... | ... | 2 |
| Housing and Town Planning | ... | ... | ... | 9 |
| Informal notices | ... | ... | ... | 1 |
| Outstanding | ... | ... | ... | 0 |

SCHOOLS.

Elementary Schools.—There are six demoninational schools in the district. They were maintained in good sanitary condition. Water is laid on and the sanitary offices are sufficient and well kept. The physical examination

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FOOD.

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Meat.—There are two slaughter houses in the district, and nuisances found at the quarterly inspection have been remedied. In the absence of a public abattoir anything like systematic inspection of meat is impossible. No carcasses were condemned.

Slaughter houses in use 1914, 3 ; Jan. 1920, 2 ; Dec. 1920, 2.

Bakehouses.—There are three bakehouses in this district. These were regularly inspected and found in a most satisfactory condition.

Factories and Workshops —The factories and workshops in the district were all kept under observation and I had no complaint to make.

Sale of Food and Drugs Act.—This Act is administered by the County Council.

PREVALENCE AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

One case each of the following infectious diseases were notified :—

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----------------|
| Puerperal Fever | ... | ... | Woodrow |
| Ophthalmia Neonatorum | ... | ... | Hilperton |
| Diphtheria | ... | ... | Melksham Forest |
| Malaria | ... | ... | Whitley |
| Tuberculosis | ... | ... | Semington |

and two cases of Scarlet Fever, one each from Bowerhill Lane and Semington.

Methods of dealing with Infectious Diseases.—Cases of Diphtheria, Scarletina and Enteric Fever are removed when desirable to the Joint Isolation Hospital at Trowbridge. In this hospital there is ample accommodation for the treatment of these diseases. There is a permanent staff, an ambulance, a steam disinfecter and laundry.

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MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

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